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## COMMUNITY-CONFLICT AMONG THE DEPRESSED CASTES OF ANDHRA

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THE Mala and the Madiga are the untouchable castes of Andhra. This Telugu-speaking area comprises eleven districts of Madras State besides portions of Hyderabad, Orissa and Mysore. The present study is confined to Madras State only. The Mala are known to be the counterparts of the Paraiyan of Tamilnad and of the Holeya of Mysore, while the Chakkeliyan of Tamilnad acknowledge themselves as Madiga and continue even to-day to speak Telugu at home, and in Mysore the Madiga are known as such. The Mala and the Madiga occupy the lowest status in society and their social disabilities are numerous. To mention them briefly, their touch is believed to cause pollution; they live outside the main village; they cannot draw water from the common wells; the washermen and barbers do not serve them.

This condemnation of these castes by the society apart, these castes between themselves observe scrupulous segregation. The Mala have a separate hamlet, while the Madiga have their own. The food from the hands of one is taboo for the other. So is water. They never draw water from the same well, and where only one caste has a well in its hamlet and the other has not, the members of the latter caste have to either depend on the ponds or go all the way to the main village and wait at the well for some interior casteman to pour water in their pitchers. Even when they have to eat together the food offered by their master, the Mala and the Madiga sit in separate rows, if they do not actually turn their backs on each other. This can also be observed among the young boys and girls of the two castes that attend the labour schools where mid-day meal is served. In the rural areas these boys of the depressed castes sit in separate rows. If the food is cooked by a member of one of these castes, the boys of the other caste do not eat, so much so the service of a cook

belonging to the interior caste has to be enlisted in these schools. Marriage between the two castes is unthinkable. There is such a deep-seated antagonism between these communities that the very name of one causes irritation in the other. The sword-dance of the Madiga which forms an essential part of all their ceremonies is the most despicable thing for the Mala. If a Madiga brandishes a red cloth that is enough insult for the Mala and if the former comes out with a sword in hand and bells on his ankles to embark on his sword-dance, the Mala, if possible, will maul him and his castemen, or if not, will coolly quit the place and evade that abominable sight. Aggravating the situation, the Madiga go on adding to the traditional dance-song new pieces of invective aimed at the Mala.

A Mala procession can never pass through a Madiga hamlet and the Madiga cannot beat their drums near the Mala residence. Where one caste is predominant the bridegroom of the other caste cannot mount a horse and go about the main streets even in a town. Any small incident is enough to act as a trigger for the outburst of violence between these two castes. Even recently at Budavaripalli near Kurnool a battle royal raged between the two communities for an alleged insult of a Madiga woman by a Mala. At Kadavakollu in Tadipatri taluk of Anantapur district some members of Mala caste have been murdered for encroaching on the Madiga's right to carrion. In Totalacheruvupalli of Nellore district ( Udayagiri taluk ) a conflict is smouldering since long resulting in prolonged litigation, and any day it might burst into devouring flames. These are but a few instances of overt violence and aggression that occur from time to time between these two castes. There is a lot of mutual hatred and aversion. On the positive side each caste claims to be the superior and on the negative side the other caste is treated as a worthy object to be consigned to perdition. An insult from one depressed caste is insufferable for the other. There are social conventions which enjoin that if one is beaten, or spit upon by a member of the other depressed caste, not only his castemen should wreak vengeance on the offender, but the injured man himself should pay a fine for the ignominy he brought upon his community. While adultery with higher castes is not taken serious notice of, any illicit connection with the other depressed caste is met with drastic ostracism. If a Mala and a Madiga cohabit they have no place in either caste and they will be forced to flee their homes. At Eedigapalli and Edimpalli of Nellore taluk a whole hamlet is formed of hybrid offsprings who have created a separate caste of their own contracting marriages

amongst themselves. A similar hamlet is formed near Brahmam Matham in Badveli taluk of Cuddepah district. At many places the scavenger service is manned mostly by such heretical spouses.

The impact of Christianity has given occasion to the manifestation of this deep seated conflict of the two castes in another form. It also discloses what relations an alien can establish amongst these castes in the context of the traditional antagonism. Wherever I went during my tours, there was a tendency in me to settle down in the hamlet which is bigger whether it is of the Mala or the Madiga. This at once created a suspicion in the minds of other castes who always tried to maintain some distance from me. The tendency to begin baptism with the bigger group must have been natural in the case of Christian Missionaries. The result is that where the Madiga predominate the converts amongst them constitute a greater proportion to the total caste than the proportion of the Mala converts, and vice versa. In Udaigiri taluk of Nellore district the Madiga constitute the majority, and Christian converts, excepting in a few villages, are found amongst Madiga and Madiga alone, while the Mala who constitute the minority have clung on to their old denomination. In places where two missions are at work, each comes to claim the allegiance of one particular community, evoking the aversion of the other. At Markapuram in Kurnool district the Mala flocked to the Roman Catholic Church while the Madiga acceded to American Baptist Mission. In Nellore town itself the two castes joined separate churches.

This animosity among the depressed classes is, however, not without parallels. Hutton reveals that in Assam a Patni would not row for a Muchi and in Bombay the Mahar refuses to share their councils and conferences with the Chamar. The counterparts of Mala and Madiga in Tamilnad and Mysore carry on their traditional feud.

### LEGENDARY BASIS

In the mythology of these people the following facts afford some clue to this antagonism. According to the Madiga, the Mala were born in the menstrual blood of Parvati, and so their name is derived from *Maila* or polluting substance. But the Mala claim that they were born from Parvati's garland or *Mala*. The mythology of the Mala continues that the sword, the red cloth and the ankle bells that are now displayed by the Madiga originally belonged to the Mala. By divine dispensation the Mala began their lives on earth as persons in charge of the graveyards and Virabahu was the first

Mala on earth. This Virabahu had come to have a Madiga concubine, and one day when he was closeted with her, her brothers turned up from the forest and beheaded him, after which they took away from him the sword, the red cloth and the ankle bells. Since then these articles became the possessions of the Madiga. So the Mala claim that these articles which were theirs were snatched away by the Madiga in a cowardly manner and through disgraceful means. They adduce the following lines of the dance-song sung by the Madiga in support of their contention: "To Virabahu belonged this sword, we got it for us in a special mode." The Madiga disapprove of this legend and claim that Virabahu was himself a Madiga and the reference to a certain method only means the way in which Adijambava created this world and bestowed upon the Madiga these implements to carry on certain specialised functions. These legends have a wide currency and in consequence to an average Madiga a Mala symbolises pollution, and to a Mala the Madiga looks just like a bastard. Such are the rationalisations that underlie their outlooks. Scurrilous mythological lore symbolise their violent, antagonistic attitudes.

### FACTIONS AMONGST THE CASTES

But the Mala and the Madiga are not self-contained communities. They are but parts of a bigger hierarchical Hindu Society and as such the attitudes and the activities of the other castes and their influence on the relations between the depressed castes must be taken into account. At the very first glance, it will be obvious that the dichotomy amongst the depressed castes is a part of the wider cleavage that obtains among many lower castes in South India. These factions were termed as Right-hand and Left-hand sections. Thurston cites a passage from the Census Report of Mysore (1891) which relates that Sankyamuni and Yugamuni the ancestors of the Holeya (the counterpart of Mala) and the Madiga, stood at the right and left sides of the entrance respectively when they received the curse from Indra, for the sin of killing the divine cow, Kamadhenu. In the Mysore Gazetteer also, it is written that the Holeya are referred to as *Balagai* (of the Right Hand group) and the Madiga as *Edagai* (of the Left-hand group). These designations as Right-hand and Left-hand groups are not in vogue in Andhra, but nevertheless they are convenient terms of reference. This division in Andhra ostensibly based on religious factions. All the castes of the right-hand section claim to be the followers of Ramanuja while the followers of the left-hand section claim to be Saivites.

The difficulty in enumerating and identifying these several castes has been explained at length by Hutton. The list I present is compiled out of whatever information I could gather from the roving acrobats and such repertories of caste lore. The first group consists of castes whose number is eighteen and a half. These are Balija (small scale agriculturists and traders), Mala, Chakali (washermen), Mangali (Barbers), Kummari (Potters), Vaddi (Stonebuilder and ground-levellers), Medara (bamboo-workers), Nunegamalla (one-bull-oil pressers), Guda Desari (nomadic beggars) Pitchigunta, Dommara, Erukala, Lambadi, Mondri, Banda, Yanadi (criminal tribes) Gudaram, Elipokatla (their identity not known to the writer) and Gudidevara. The last named caste is counted only as a half because he is allowed to carry on his profession of carrying an idol of a goddess round the village, begging alms only for the first half of the day. For the second half he is expected to rest.

This section is generally known as *setti samme* or Setti group and many castes of this group append the suffix 'setti' to their caste names. Its leadership hails from the first-named caste, Balija who purport to be the philosophical guides of this sect. Though Brahmins usually keep aloof from this sectarian schism in the lower castes, at a few places even Brahmin adherence of the extreme Ramanujite cult have openly associated themselves with this Setti group. Late Yeturi Ganesayya of Bata in Udaigiri taluk (Nellore district), I was told, used to go to the extent of dining with the castes of this sect on all ceremonial occasions including funeral feasts. Some Vaisyas of Vinjamuru of the same taluk even now associate themselves with this sect.

The second section comprises seven castes, Berichetti (Trader), Deyanga (weaver), Kamsali (smiths), Golla (cowherds), Jangam (Saivite priests) Nunegamalla (two-bull oil pressers) and Madiga. This sect professes allegiance to Saivism and indeed Sangam, Devanga and Kamsali are extreme Saivites. The virile and the local leaders of this group are Golla. Both Mala and Madiga, are used by their respective sects as mere fodder for the opponents' powder.

A probe into the religious layers of these communities reveals certain prior dispositions. Channa Kesavulu, the caste deity of the Mala is not worshipped by the Madiga. Likewise Mathamma, a form of *Adisakti* and the tutelary deity of the Madiga, is not shown any deference by the Mala. In the traditional caste song of the Madiga, there is a repeated address to *linga* the idol of Siva. Any old Madiga even today proudly claims that in the far-famed past every implement of his, bore the impress of Siva's idol. But not all the

Mala castemen are Ramanujites, nor all the Madiga Saivites. The existence of Saivites among the Mala might be a tribute to Saivite proselytism and the handful of Madiga Ramanujites here and there might represent the achievement of Ramanuja's preachings. But this sectarian minority in each caste never formed a distinguishable unit by itself. Sectarian leanings are drowned in the ocean of caste considerations. The lone example of faith claiming the better of caste is afforded by a Madiga priest of Mahimaluru in Atmakur taluk of Nellore district, an ardent follower of Ramanuja, who does not mind dining with a Ramanujite Mala but never dines with a Saivite Madiga. But even he has given his daughter in marriage to a Saivite Madiga, and though in dining he transcended the boundries of caste, in marriage he could not.

Judging from strict religious practice apart from professed fealty one cannot sort out any individual as a Ramanujite or Saivite, except on the basis of divergence in the mortual ceremonies. In all the practices and customs connected with the other branches of life, Saivites and Ramanujites are undistinguishable among the depressed classes. Both the castes provide the important functionaries for reciting *hosanas* and for severing the head of the sacrificial animal in the festivals of the village goddesses like Ankamma and Polamma. Rama is the popular god of all, and most of the hamlets whether of the Mala or the Madiga erect temples for Rama. All make vows to the prominent deity of the locality whoever it be. This situation reveals that the religious superstructure in its growth, has by-passed the barriers of caste and left them as they were. Any explanation of this two-fold division of society on the basis of religious sects alone is untenable. What suffices for this study is to note that this division is a sociological reality, the wide ramifications of which embrace many an aspect of social life, leading to a clear-cut alignment of the lower castes.

There are also certain taboos in connection with interdining based on these factions. The Mala and the Madiga, though relegated to the lowest position in Hindu society, do not accept food from certain castes of the opposite sect who may be occupying a higher social status. Thus for the Mala, the food offered by Kamsali, Zangam, Devanga, and the two-bull oil-pressers is taboo, while the Madiga refuse food from Chakali, Mangali and one-bull oil-pressers. The taboo on interdining between the Mala and the Madiga is sacrosanct and a Mala whether a Ramanujite or a Saivite thinks it a sacrilege to dine in a house of a Madiga whatever be his faith. The Madiga also

thinks likewise about dining with a Mala. Whatever may be the extent of exactitude to which these taboos are observed by other castes aligned in this dichotomy, this factionalism has struck deep roots in the emotional life of the depressed castes. The Balija and the Golla, the articulate champions of these two sects respectively, often whip up animosity and the Mala and Madiga readily jump into the field to give vent to their pent-up feelings.

I came upon a printed copy of rules and regulations prescribed by the leader of the Setti groups, one Ramaswami Setti, who is believed to have had considerable influence in Kalahasti and Venkatgiri taluks. Testifying to a central organisation, this paper postulates a code of social behaviour for the castes that come under this group, and suitable fines and punishments were prescribed for the delinquents. There is also a reference in it that all these castes have given solemn assent to have the said Ramaswami Chetty as the supreme arbitrator with regard to all disputes within the castes of this sect.

In fact wherever the Balija are prominent, the Mala show an enormous self-confidence, and where the Golla preponderate the position of the Madiga is unsullied. The social position of the two depressed castes often depends on the comparative strength of the Golla and Balija. Not seldom the factional favouritism exceeds its limits and tilts the delicate balance of social relations in an area that is established by each caste keeping within its bounds.

### OCCUPATIONAL SET-UP

The occupational division among the depressed castes is important as a factor working for cooperation and conflict. An average village in Andhra has two distinct functional adjuncts, a Mala hamlet and a Madiga hamlet. In north-western Andhra, the Madiga outnumber the Mala and in Southern Andhra the Mala preponderate. In consequence not all the villages in the former area have Mala hamlets, and some villages in southern Andhra are without Madiga hamlets. But a overwhelming majority of the villages have both the hamlets, and the society as a whole moves on with the Mala and the Madiga as essential parts in the functioning of the village organisation. There are certain social functions which are exclusively assigned to the depressed classes. The office of a village servant that entails all manual assistance to the village officers is their perquisite. The carriage of the village cattle is their right. Digging of graves and performing the two important tasks of cutting the neck of the sacrificial animal and sprinkling the blood-soaked grain over the fields during the festival of the village goddess, are their duties. They also beat drums and

provide trumpets and fanfare on all festive occasions. In some villages they have also the specialised communal functions such as *Neerukattu* which means feeding all the fields with water from the village tank and *Bandila* that is, staving off the cattle from the crop. Tanning of skin and making articles of leather constitute the exclusive profession of the Madiga. In the non-deltaic area many a Mala family ekes out its existence by weaving. The dreary agricultural labour and the drudgery of bond-serfdom are the lot of both these castes, beside of a few other lower classes. Excepting leather work which is the traditional occupation of the Madiga, all other tasks are performed by both these communities. This is not to say that both the castes together perform these tasks at all places. On the contrary, what the Mala do at a place becomes their special preserve and an encroachment upon it by the Madiga will not be countenanced, while at another place the same occupation becomes the perquisite of the Madiga who keep the Mala at bay. The right to these various services is jealously guarded by each community, and there is a (vague) feeling that these rights belonged to the original settlers of the locality.

If we now attempt to delineate the territorial distribution of the rights and privileges of the respective castes, we arrive at the following broad outlines. In the N. W. Andhra that is, the major portions of Bellary and Anantapur districts, all these rights belong to the Madiga. Here the Madiga are attached to the land holders under regular employment. They also work as village servants, dig graves, perform all the functions in the village festival and claim all the carcasses. The Mala in these parts have to depend on haphazard agricultural labour besides some other skilled occupation. A little eastward, the conditions differ. In Tadipatri taluk of Anantapur district bordering upon Kurnool the Mala are the common grave-diggers. The right of working as a village servant is shared by both the castes, and if in one village there is a Madiga as a village servant, in another village a Mala performs the same function. The carrion is shared by both. Further eastward, in Kurnool district, both Mala and Madiga share in the rights to carrion and to the office of the village servant. Digging of graves is the monopoly of the Mala, and severing the head of the sacrificial animal in the village festival is the prerogative of the Madiga. The other function in the festival, namely sprinkling of blood-soaked grain over the fields is lost to the Madiga here, and it is done at some places by the Mala and at other places by another caste called Boya. To the south from here, that is in the border taluks



between Cuddapah and Nellore districts the same conditions described for Kurnool exist with the exception that the task of sprinkling the blood-soaked grain is performed by the Mala alone and is not shared by the Boya. So here in the village festival there is an equal distribution of functions, as it were, between these two castes viz., while a Madiga beheads the animal, a Mala runs about with a winnowing plate filled with blood-soaked grain and sprinkles it over all the fields within the village boundaries. All over the coastal area of Nellore district both the functions in the festival are performed by the Mala as also the task of grave-digging. The privilege to work as a village servant as well as the right to carrion is shared by both. In Gudur and Venkatagiri taluks of Nellore district the carcass of an animal belonging to a ryot is shared in the following way. The right hind-leg as well as the flesh round about the vertebral column will be taken by the Madiga attached to the ryot's family; the left hind-leg is taken by the Mala farm-servants of the ryot; the right foreleg goes to the village servant who may be a Mala or a Madiga; the remaining leg is taken by the other functionaries like field-watcher and water regulator, where they exist, otherwise it will be consumed by the Mala farm-servants. In Chittor district, that is the southernmost Andhra, all these rights belong to the Mala. The Madiga in these parts have to depend on his traditional profession of making leather implements, like shoes, buckets and belts, besides miscellaneous wage-labour.

What is of significance in this set up is that this occupational division does not lead to an exchange of services between these two castes themselves. Whatever a depressed caste performs it is in the service of the higher castes but rarely for the other depressed caste. Working as a village servant and performing some important functions in the festivals are services rendered unto the higher castes only. So is grave-digging, and even if one depressed castemen are functioning as general grave-diggers, as far as the other caste is concerned the latter digs graves for its own dead. Then only remains, the need of the Mala for the shoes which are made by the Madiga. Even in this case, the habit of the majority to go without shoes, and the practice of Mala farm-servants receiving their shoes indirectly through their employer, diminish a direct dependence of the Mala on the Madiga. So the binding influence of division of labour is lost to them. The bulk of services to the other castes, which both the depressed castes are ready to render, constitute, in MacIver's terms, 'like interests' leading not to concordance but to competition and conflict in so far as the gains of one are the losses of the other. The fluidity of occu-

pational division that allows the same tasks to be performed by one caste at one place and by another at the second place, brings to a clash the similar interests of these castes.

Even taking into view only a limited area, the set mode of occupational differentiation works smoothly when the obtaining pattern is undisturbed at least within that area. But if it contradicts what either community accepts as traditionally determined, then there is conflict. The following examples represent deviations from the prevailing patterns of occupational division—deviations often wrought by the sectarian prejudices of the more powerful castes. In N. W. Andhra, as already noted all the rights and privileges belong to the Madiga. But then exceptions exist. In Anantapur and Gooty towns the Mala dig graves for the Baliya, and at the latter place they told me that this right has been conceded to them by the Madiga at the pressure of the Baliya, some twenty years ago. In Siddalapuram near Anantapur where the Baliya are predominant the Mala dig graves for all castes. Recently in Kadavakollu of Tadipatri taluk, the Baliya tried to give their dead animals exclusively to the Mala against usage, which led to a violent riot between the Mala and the Madiga. At Totala Cbaruvupalli in Udaigiri taluk of Nellore district, the exercise by the Mala, of the right of joining the regular employment of the ryots, which is generally denied to them in these parts, is a constant eyesore for the Madiga. In southern Andhra at Panapakam of Chittoor district, the Baliya went to the extent of depriving the Madiga of their traditional occupation of providing leather implements and got their buckets stitched by their Mala farm-servants which is a unique instance. At Dakkali in Venkatagiri taluk of Nellore district, the Golla who are strong, encouraged the Madiga to repudiate the Mala's share in carrion, which led to prolonged tension between these two castes.

An additional factor that often precipitates a quarrel is the example of neighbouring locality where their counterparts enjoy greater privileges. When a Madiga of Kovur taluk in Nellore district sings that both the swords, big and small, belong to him, he is extending to his taluk the privileges which his castemen enjoy in Udaigiri taluk of the same district. The big sword referred to in the song is the instrument by which the sacrificial animal is beheaded and which in Kovur taluk is handled by the Mala and not the Madiga. This evokes an immediate protest from the Mala of this area to whom the Madiga with his far-fetched claims looks like an imposter.

What is more, the division of occupation is related in their

minds, to differentiation of social status. To work as a village servant and to be the chief functionary in a festival are symbols of social status. In the midst of miserable existence, carrion comes as a substitute source of subsistence, besides enlivening their parched palates. Grave digging as any other traditional right, urges the holder of the right to perpetuate his profession. Low in the social ladder and performing the lowly tasks, the Mala and the Madiga suffer from all the disadvantages of a shifting pattern of occupational division and lack of traditionally determined social status as between them. With a legendary lore that provokes each to pour obscene abuse on the other, these castes wrangle for superior status and scramble for enlarged occupation. That none of these two can accept to be at the lowest level of the social scale is a proof of the genius of the land that fosters hierarchical attitudes and creates a tendency in each caste to rate itself superior to at least some. Mandelbaum aptly sums up the social organisation of India: "Each community within a village cherishes some bit of custom, some practice which is distinctive to that group, and which supposedly marks its superiority to some other social group. For no community is so lowly that it does not consider some other below it on the social scale." (Hindu Muslim Conflict in India, The Middle East Journal, October, 1947.)

### FRUSTRATION

Added to all this, there is the constant oppression by the higher castes that stifles the entire social life of these classes. Deep frustration is evident and aggressive impulses naturally surge up. But where will aggression find its vent? The real sources of oppression are not amenable for attack. So animosity is diverted in a different direction towards an object more within the reach. It is thus the two depressed castes often stand with their swords drawn at each other. The following passage in Powdermaker's essay on the channelisation of Negro aggression by cultural process throws much light on social conditions like these which involve conflict amongst the down-trodden communities in the constant presence of oppressive, higher social classes: "The high degree of intra-Negro quarreling, crime and homicide,...can be directly correlated with the Negro's frustration in being unable to vent his hostility on the White. The mechanism of substitution of one object of aggression for another is well known to the scientist and the layman. The substitution of Negro for White is encouraged by the culture pattern of White Official and unofficial leniency towards intra-Negro crime." (Personality, edited by Kluckhohn and Murray Page 477). While the American situation

implies conflict within the same Negro community, the situation under consideration has the additional invigorating factor of the two parties being separate in groups with different labels to identify themselves. Further, there is the direct incitement by other castes and very often these are beguiled into unnecessary conflicts. Such conflicts continue to serve the selfish interests of the higher castes. Though the two sects arrayed against each other embrace many a caste, the conflict is most acute among the depressed classes and its edge gets progressively blunted among the higher castes, which again shows that myth has a mightier hold on the poorer classes and animosity has a stronger base where frustration is deeper. The Baliya and the Golla the respective champions of the two opposing sects freely interdine, while the Mala and the Madiga cannot contemplate it. At Totalacheruvupalli of Nellore district the village *Munsif* who is a Baliya relieved himself of all sectarian prejudices and began exploiting both the Mala and the Madiga unscrupulously taking advantage of a minor conflict that arose between these two castes during a festival. The Reddi and Kamma, the landed castes of Andhra, do not generally attach themselves to any sect and exploit with greater ease the differences among the depressed castes.

## HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND MODERN ANTHROPOLOGY

N. A. KHAN

The key to Marxist approach to socio-cultural relations is provided by Engels: *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, published in 1884, although it is diffused in a scattered form in *Anti Duhring* (1877-78), the first volume of *Capital* (Third Edition, 1883) and the English Edition, 1888, of the *Communist Manifesto*, written jointly by Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels. The basis was provided by Lewis H. Morgan whose *Ancient Society*, Karl Marx had read towards the close of his life and made full ninety-eight pages notes with extracts from it. He himself could not complete the task of interpreting Morgan which was left to his friend and associate, Engels. What Marx himself would have written on it we do not know, for although Engels has rather profusely quoted from Marx, his observations are looked upon with certain reservation by some writers.<sup>1</sup> The main line of reasoning is, however, this. The fundamental determinants of social culture are the mode and technique of production which in their turn breed attitudes, actions and civilisations. They have a logic of their own, viz, that the change according to necessities inherent in them and do not require any external propeller to produce their successors. There is thus one-way relationship between economic forces and cultural phenomena and the course of history marches on producing theses and anti-theses in a dialectical way. Much has been said on this 'oversimplification' of history, the logic employed to buttress the point, the authenticity or otherwise of the data used and deliberate negligence or casual oversight of other contemporary evidence which did not obviously fit in this scheme of things. Even assuming that the conclusions arrived at were 'logical' on the basis of knowledge then existing, there is every reason to bring them up-to-date and test whether the same conclusions hold good in the light of modern scientific researches in the field of anthropology and other social sciences.

Nor is it by any means an impossible proposition. Marx has been elaborated in various directions by his own successors. We may quote, for instance, the theory of Capitalist Development in Agricul-

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1. Cf. Joseph Schumpeter goes as far as to say that 'we cannot be sure that he always got the latter's meaning. His interpretations must, therefore be used with care' (*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, p. 39).

ture by Lenin, Lenin's Imperialism and Maurice Dobb's Studies in the Development of Capitalism, not to mention other writers, like Hobson,<sup>1</sup> G. D. H. Cole,<sup>2</sup> Veblen<sup>3</sup> and Paul Sweezy,<sup>4</sup> who have been accused of deviationism in one respect or the other. (Cf. Cole's observations on the behaviour of the middle class and Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption). Attempts have been made to reconstruct his theory of classes and periodic economic crises inherent in capitalist structure. But so far no equally commendable effort has been made to review his position regarding cultural history.

What can be the possible reasons for this? Is it due to any fear lest the Marxist interpretations may not hold the light of later researches, or due to Marxist's faith in the logic of his reasoning and, therefore, the redundancy of any further corroborations, or due to a distrust of modern 'bourgeois' sociology and social anthropology and hence their mistaken conclusions and deliberate misconstructions of facts? To hold the first is to stike at the root of Marxism and its otherwise reasonable and sufficiently, if not altogether consistently, logical attitude. Nor will Marxists agree with Max Eastman who holds that Marx's scientific socialism is anything but scientific, that is philosophy in the very sense that he denounced philosophy, that it is a deliberate attempt at rationalisation of history and as such particularly unscientific in its attitude.<sup>5</sup> Sydney Hook in a similar strain has dubbed 'a priori rationalism' or 'voluntaristic irrationalism' of later Marxists as foreign to the spirit of Karl Marx's theory.<sup>6</sup> Joseph Schumpeter has, however, been more liberal in his appreciation of Marx but has criticised him from the point of view of logical construction, basic assumptions and structural defects in reasoning.<sup>7</sup>

We are faced with the problem as to why then this gap between Marxist generalisations and cotemporary evidence? If fundamental social relations of production influence the character, extent and development of cultural activity, why have they not been perceived as such (by Marxists) in the findings of social sciences in the last half a century? Why is it that Marxists still cling to researches

1. John A. Hobson: The Evolution of Modern Capitalism; and his Imperialism.
2. G. D. H. Cole: The Meaning of Marxism.
3. T. Veblen: The Theory of Leisure Class.
4. Paul Sweezy: The Theory of Capitalist Development; and Socialism.
5. The Marxian Philosophy, in The Making of Society, edited by C. F. Calverton, Modern Library Series.
6. The Scope of Marxian Theory, in C. F. Calverton, op. cit.
7. Op. cit.

which by all account are now out of date? Even if we desist from labelling this as 'intellectual debacle of orthodox Marxism'<sup>1</sup> the lacuna is 'challenging the serious efforts of students of Marxism to explain. Nor will it do any good to characterise the entire mass of contemporary evidence as vitiated by wrong approach of 'bourgeois' anthropologists who seek to explain the current attitudes and find primitive and even pre-human analogies in an effort to justify the continued presence of certain institutions and cultural surrogates which are the peculiar product of nineteenth century individualism and middle class morality. That may be true in part but as against that we have the consideration that modern anthropology is more developed in technique than in Morgan's days it ever was and any generalisations based on unscientific and loosely collected data then existing can at best have only partial validity. Nor did Engels ever show any such rigidity of approach. For he realised the necessity of re-writing his, *Origin of the Family*, even after seven years of its first publication during which time, he admits, our knowledge of the primitive forms of the family has made much advances.<sup>2</sup> He tried to trace the development of the history of the family from Bachofen to Morgan and made important observations on the English anthropologists of his day, chiefly McLennan.<sup>3</sup>

Many important developments have taken place in cultural anthropology during the last hundred years or so. Various waves of diffusionists, historical school, environmentalists, functionalists and lastly the social psychologists have left their impress on this otherwise young science. Morgan seemed to hold the day for some time in the middle of the nineteenth century and had considerable influence among the so-called radicals in spite of the severe attacks of McLennan on his theory of nomenclature and the assault of many other thinkers on his contentions. Viewed in the light of historical developments of his day he was but to have popular intellectual support as his theory supplied the social counterpart of the then prevailing Darwinian hypothesis of biological evolution. Those were the days of rising industrialism, of *laissez faire* economy and competitive logic and both Morgan and his successors found ready applause from the current social attitudes rooted in the heightened individualism of middle class ethics.<sup>4</sup> As against that the tendency in the

1. Sydney Hook, loc. cit.

2. *Origin of the Family*, Indian Edition (1944), p. 4.

3. *Ibid*, Preface to the Fourth Edition (1891), pp. 8 et. seq.

4. C. F. Calverton, loc. cit.

first half of the twentieth century has been towards a greater emphasis on the group rather than the individual and a reorientation of the nineteenth century mores and absolutistic concepts. This could not but have its effect on the social sciences. The *laissez faire* view in economics has to an extent been discredited. The need for some measure of public regulation of private property and enterprise is recognised. The Darwinian hypothesis of competition and survival of the fittest has been supplemented by stress on cooperation in different levels of plant, animal and human life as shown by modern ecology. The Gestalt view was introduced in social psychology and had its repercussions on the methods and techniques of analysis in modern sociology. The theory of classes took a more concrete (or deviationist?) shape in the groups and stress was laid on understanding the various segments of culture in their totality and not as isolated traits, in functional anthropology. We thus find that the emphasis is on the total situation and away from the simple generalisations so characteristic of the earlier period.

Is this all a mental camouflage intentionally created to debar us from understanding the true social situation, the motive forces working behind it and the shape the things must inevitably take due to inexorable economic circumstances? Is this talk about groups and institutions an apologia for the existing social code or a diversion from the main economic (and social) problem viz. the class conflict? I have my own doubt if it is. But even if we take this 'over simplification' of the situation as approximately correct, the fact remains that no serious attempt has been made so far to expose this mass of seemingly confused thinking *from the point of view of present methodology*.<sup>1</sup> Nor do I think it is an impossible task. If Edward Westermarck<sup>2</sup> could be discredited by equally voluminous and contesting evidence of Robert Briffault<sup>3</sup> and some eminent biologists,<sup>4</sup> there is no reason why the host of other anthropologists may not be likewise treated by an up-to-date scrutiny of historical antecedents.

Already we find some aversion from the monographic study of particular cultures to a consideration of the cultural phenomena in the

1. Even as late as in 1947 there was the controversy between Leslie A. White and Robert H. Lowie on the justification of Morgan and his principles (See *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 49, no. 3, July-September, 1947).
2. *The History of Human Marriage*, 3 vols.
3. *The Mothers*, 3 vols.
4. Eg. Dr. Gerrit S. Miller and Dr. Hamilton.



background of the total historical situation.<sup>1</sup> This is from the functionalists' view point. On the other hand the theory of cultural compulsives as explaining in part the prevalent attitude in the social sciences has been proposed by C. F. Calverton,<sup>2</sup> and the ethos of culture or the 'social milieu' as a convenient apparatus for understanding particular social traits has found favour with a group of anthropologists of the Boas-Benedict school.<sup>3</sup> Here is, I find, the meeting ground for historical materialism and modern anthropology. If it can be sufficiently established, as I think it can, that cultural compulsives or ethos of culture are in themselves moulded by social relations of production, much of the gap can thus be bridged. I am not oblivious of the fact that these writers (viz. Boas and others) have been variously criticised for their 'non-theoretical' approach<sup>4</sup> and that Marx himself denounced historians who tried to interpret social realities in terms of 'social attitudes and their verbalisations (ideologies or, as Pareto would have said, derivations)', which later on took a more concrete shape in Sociology of Knowledge at the hands of Max Scheler and Karl Mannheim. But 'if ideas or values were not for him the prime movers of the social process, neither were they mere smoke'. 'Marx did not hold that religion, metaphysics, schools of art, ethical ideas and political volitions were either reducible to economic motives of no importance. He only tried to unveil the economic conditions which rise and fall'<sup>5</sup>. I do not know how far the Marxists in general will agree with this. While there may be a disinclination to accept any but a rigidly economic interpretation by orthodox Marxists, the more progressive among them will certainly be agreeable to the view that Marx never meant economic motives to be the sole determinants of social realities. If I have been able to understand Marx, and I find support from some Marxists, what he meant was that social relations of production set the stage for social institutions to take shape and there can be innumerable varieties of forms that these institutions can assume. Marx for example did not contest the role of the individual in helping to crystallise such social attitudes or precipitate their

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1. B. Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change*.
  2. *The Making of Man*, Modern Library Series, Introduction.
  3. See Ruth Benedict, *How Natives Think?*, George Allen and Unwin; also her *Patterns of Culture*.
  4. Leslie A. White, loc. cit.
  5. Joseph Schumpeter, op. cit., pp. 10-II. It may be noted that *prima facie* this argument runs counter to that given by Friedrich Engels in his *Anti Duhring*. But Schumpeter would hold, as already noted, that Engels perhaps did not correctly interpret Marx.

doom, and in this way he differs from the absolutely positivistic approach of Hegel.<sup>1</sup> Nor does the history of the last fifty years, which capitalism is taking numerous shapes in under-developed countries and is frantically trying to save itself from the impending collapse, warrant us to accept an oversimplified, abbreviated statement about the future course of events. What we can believe, in consistence with Marx, is therefore, the view that the possible developments will be in a circle conditioned by the economic circumstances, that the logic of history will come to assert itself, though at a later period, in the case of extensions of deviations (Cf. Imperialism or even Communalism), and that the future course will be as visualised in *synthesis with the new developments* that may in the interim period be brought about. This, I believe, is the truly dynamic theory of culture change or social progress, whatever we may call it, and the introduction of this much of flexibility in our approach may bring us nearer the rapprochement between historical materialism and social sciences. However, the link between social relations of production and total pattern or ethos of culture, the *method* by which it is brought about, and the possible deviations from accepted norm, in the light of material available at present, will have to be rather more clearly established.

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1. For further discussion, please see G. V. Plekhanov, *The Role of the Individual in History*.

# TEN ASSUMPTIONS FOR CULTURE RESEARCH AT JUBBULPORE

HENRY. H. PRESLER

The Department of Organized Research at Leonard Theological College began its activities on July 11, 1949, by reviewing its initial assumptions ( which are subject to change ).

## The Source of Information

1. It was assumed that our research would be "scientific research." <sup>1</sup> Science relies upon one way of knowing: sense perception ( empiricism ). Why do we limit our research effort to the way of science? The first answer is that very constructive and illuminating contributions to religious knowledge are accumulating through the research of social scientists. The second answer is that science has this unique feature: Two or more scientists working on the same problem with the same factors and conditions, and using the same methods, will come out with the same correlations. We chose "scientific" research because it is capable of erecting a structure of knowledge within which agreement is possible. The third answer is that scientific research discovers the kind of knowledge that enables men to control, to some extent, their social environment.

## An Independent Discipline

2. It was further assumed that scientific research is a recognized, independent discipline, with an established body of theory, procedure, method and technique. For students registering with this Department there are required courses and an internship.

## Tentative Beginning

3. It was assumed that we do not yet know which of the established theories, procedures, methods and techniques may be useful in Jubbulpore, M. P., India. It was not known which ones could be employed by Christians working among Christians, or, among non-Christians; which by foreign Whites, and which by Indians; or which would be relevant to available data. It was recalled that concepts, categories and methods have depended upon the materials studied. Each time social scientists have reached a new terrain, they have had to forge a new or modified methodology. Departmental endeavors may be for some time to come, determined and hopeful gropings. How to conduct research in Jubbulpore is itself a problem for research.

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1. See note at end of this article.

### Cooperative Drudgery

4. It was further recognized that discoveries through research are **not** based on the exertions of one institution, or even of one generation. The size of the research field makes cooperation of many qualified persons necessary. Another reason for joint endeavour is that scarcely any individual has a specialist's command of more than one field.

### Three Types of Social Investigation

5. Turning to the chosen field of culture research, our next assumption was that only one kind of investigation fulfills all the requirements of scientific research, namely, the one yielding significant correlations between recurring social variables. To explain this point requires the next several hundred words.

In India, a large number of individuals and some institutions have already contributed to social research. Their efforts have resulted in many descriptive, some definitive, and a very few correlation studies.

*Description:* These profess to mirror a social phenomenon. Their purpose is to give full and accurate information. A factual is the end sought. By far the majority of social monographs are descriptions. These are based on questionnaires, interviews, investigations, surveys, case studies, statistical analyses, life histories, reports, maps, documents, scales, digests, etc. Fortunately for social science in India many such essays on social phenomena are appearing: perhaps an account of an individual's development, or the opinions of a group of students, or the ways of an aboriginal tribe. These descriptions, when accurate and adequate, are indispensable to scientific research. Moreover, a single case, known to be typical, may reveal a general law.

But description is incomplete as far as science is concerned. *The function of science is not to describe, but to predict.* The genesis of science is not in describing the life cycle of a disease germ, nor in describing the colour, weight and composition of a certain chemical, but in predicting the inevitable death of the parasite in the presence of the chemical. The genius of psychology is not in describing the symptoms and behavior of mild melancholia, nor in describing basket weaving, but in predicting, on the basis of empirically derived evidence, therapeutics when the two are related. Of most descriptions of social phenomena, the research scientist may ask, what are the other factors whose correlation with the described factors in change, would enable one to predict? To this question the descriptive study has no answer,

Moreover, what is evidence of a description's accuracy? Two honest investigators, describing the same society, rarely come out at the same place. Even two motion picture film of the same riot yield variant data, because the two cameras did not rest in the same spot at the same time. We really cannot know whether a description is accurate unless it provides data upon which later correlations make verifiable prediction possible. Ptolemy and Copernicus looked at the same heavenly bodies and gave different descriptions, but the latter was proven correct by its predictions.

Further, descriptions of social phenomena often serve a reformatory instead of a scientific purpose. On the basis of "startling revelations" of "hitherto unknown facts," the administrators purge their personnel, shake up their organizations, and change their policies. This may be good administration, but it does not fulfill scientific research. Science is not based upon interpretations of the facts, but on correlations between two or more recurring variables.

We conclude that descriptions of social phenomena, while essential, do not fulfill all the requirements of scientific research.

*Definitive Studies:* Such studies (of which there are too few) discover in the heterogeneous mass of complex data the elemental forms. Thus, chemistry does not consider "whiteness" and "dryness" to be the elements of table salt; the elements are sodium and chloride. Chemically, these elements cannot be further reduced, so that in discovering them chemistry got hold of the very nature of salt. All further understanding of salt was based on these two elements.

In social research, the *Linguistic Survey of India* got hold of the elemental dialects, and defined the areas and populations for each. In defining these elements, the famous survey grounded future culture studies. The *Census of India* early sifted the thousands of social groups down to the elements of sub-castes, then defined them. Less could have been accomplished in Indian culture studies without these definitions. A Harvard anthropologist has made a notable attempt to find the elements beneath such labels as "primitive," "barbarous," "civilized." Professor Coon finds the elements to be degrees of complexity in social relationships, expressed quantitatively. His elements allow a systematization of what was a matter of dispute.

This striving after what is fundamental, this willingness to sift over and over again a huge mass of data until the purest material only remains, constitutes the definitive study, indispensable to

scientific research. Such studies are greatly needed and sadly lacking to the sociology of religion in India. We know in the main only surface appearances. We don't know the elemental types of Christian converts except on the fuzzy basis of commonsense. There are thousands of Hindu temples, but who has demonstrated what are the elemental types? If we knew the elements, we could study the behaviours of an adequate sample of them, and arrive at some useful generalizations. We could recognize in combinations of elements the fundamental data. Those interested in social research could take a hint from the writer of a famous definitive study, the *Bhagavad Gita*. That Hindu had the wit to state that the elemental ways of salvation are by *gyan*, *karm* and *bhakti*. So useful seem his elements that research workers have not yet bothered to verify them. In summary, the definitive social study is built upon descriptive studies and makes sampling techniques practicable.

*Correlation Studies:* These discover relations between social factors measure the recurring changes in one set of factors that invariably follow recurring changes in related factors, and define and measure the conditions. In other words, such studies formulate the natural laws of human relations, which laws make prediction possible. Foreseeing the end of a chain of social reactions, one can decide whether to start the reactions or not. This is social control.

The correlation study fulfills the requirements of scientific research. There is as yet in India—or anywhere else for that matter—very little such. There are important reasons why correlations in the social sciences are, as yet, scarce. One reason is that sociology and anthropology are young; not enough descriptive and definitive data have been accumulated.

Another reason is that controlled experiments are impossible; a social scientist cannot put the population of a town in a test tube, control all conditions, eliminating all but certain factors and forces. Another reason is that humans, individually and as groups, have wills of their own, which make them uncertain data; we may be able to predict what a statistical average in a population will do, but not what a particular individual in that population will do; whereas the physicist can confidently predict that every uncharged iron filing will move toward a magnet. Still another reason for the paucity of correlations in the social sciences is the multiplicity of factors involved. Social phenomena are functions of such an intricate web of reciprocal influences from direct actions and reflected reactions, that social

scientists have not succeeded in accounting for all the forces. Social science is confounded by multiple causation. Its difficult task is to correlate the existence of simultaneous and paralled effects and counter-effects produced by many causes; whereas, the science of medicine, having shown that a particular fever is caused by only one species of bacteria has a much simpler task.

Although social research has not yet discovered many correlations, some notable ones have been verified. In urban ecology, for instance, the amount of suicide, insanity, disease, poverty and crime has been correlated with the distance from the center of the American metropolis. In India, social planning bodies have been able to control populations to some extent by manipulating a multiplicity of factors. Perhaps the most notable correlations have been discovered in mass psychology, as advertizing firms demonstrate the correlations between propaganda and sales. Governments have long understood the correlations between graduated income taxes and the birth rate. Yet, even these illustrations are faulty in that a tax, for instance, is not a living phenomenon. A pioneer study dealing almost entirely with human factors is F.W. Burggess's *Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage*. Even the correlations in the social studies are as yet few, they do exist and must be sought.

The further ramifications of correlation studies are many; we shall mention only two. First, one must realize that, theoretically there is some correlation between any two or more factors in a given society, because a society is one functioning whole. There is, for instance, some correlation between a bicycle shop and a post office, or between a temple and a political procession. But the correlations are not significant; they may be so slight that no predictions could be aduced. Whereas, the correlation between a given culture and a given religion is so high that one can predict. We are to search for significant or high correlations between social phenomena, such as permit prediction. The second ramification noted here is the importance of very low correlations. The pointing out of the latter promotes negative predictions. For instance, we have long known that there is an extremely low correlation between the number of Christian missionaries working in a Moslem city and the number of converts. It is equally important to social control to discover very low correlations.

In summary, of the three types.....descriptive, definitive, and correlation studies.....only the last fulfills all the requirements of research in the social sciences. The last is built upon the first two;

the second is built upon the first. A descriptive study makes one aware of a social entity; a definitive study enables one to analyze it; a correlation study permits one to understand and control it. For an indefinite period, the Department of Organized Research will probably be occupied with the first two types; it may never reach the third, but the third is its goal.

### A Limited Area

6. The sixth assumption was that our investigations would be confined, in the main, to the city of Jubbulpore. We wanted to study that which we could frequently see, hear, smell, touch. The city is to be studied as a functioning unit, as a structuralized ensemble, as a meaningful whole. Eventually we hope to have a more or less total picture. Each group within the city may be structurally closed but it is functionally connected to every other group. The urban religious institution cannot be comprehended until its city is comprehended.

### Limited Data

7. Again, it was taken for granted that the problem which the Department might study would be those for which sufficient data occur in Jubbulpore. Fortunately, this large city contains data bearing on some intricate problem, viz, the human relations in connection with industry, military, rural-urban changes, and the cultures of the Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Moslems and Christians. Jubbulpore's institutional resources are well-developed, especially as regards religious, industrial and educational associations. The city is dynamic, rapidly-growing, expansive, overflowing its boundaries. Its dominant pattern is that of conservative, orthodox Hinduism. This locale affords more than enough culture problems.

### Fragmentary Studies

8. It was assumed that the correct approach should be through fragmentary studies, and severely restricted field investigations, such as permit, by their very limitations, thoroughness, depth and certainty. Such fragments, when pieced together over the years, provide empirical, systematic, coherent data. Large units of time and space do not conduce to the minute investigations necessary to building a body of scientific knowledge. The small, laborious, painstaking, essential task is the path of scientific virtue. Each such fragmentary study should be of the common, not of the unique phenomenon.



### The Intregation of Fragmentay Studies

9. It was assumed that a department of organized research, focussing on the social, must adopt a long-term program of investigation in its own environment. This is because only a total picture of a structuralized ensemble, pieced together from fragmentary studies like a jig-saw puzzle, emerging after years of endeavor on the part of many cooperating workers, yields the explanatory knowledge desired in social research. Hence our assumption that our workers will choose a problem for which empirical data are locally available. The student registered in this department may select any problem he likes provided it has a local illustration. Thus, a church history major would produce a history of a local church. An Indian Philosophy major might write on monism, provided he could find a local *math* representing this viewpoint, which *math* becomes the focus of his writing. If a department of social research scatters its energies from Assam to Afghanistan, it acquires fragments of information that defy integration. Hence the name, Department of *Organized Research*: each investigation must be capable of fitting into an organized body of information about an organized social entity, our city. When the essential parts of the organized picture are in place, some alert students or professors with insight may perceive functional relations between those parts, and test for them.

### Two Frames of Reference

10. It was assumed that data gathered would be set in two frames of reference, the culture frame and the religious frame. By culture frame, we do not mean the museum-like collection of customs, art forms, artifacts, magical beliefs, and ancient ways, even though such collections are essential; instead, we mean the integral but changing components of present and active community life. Culture, as we view it, is the pattern of functioning relationships between a particular group of humans.

By the religious frame of reference, is meant orienting all data towards this question: Why does religion in Jubbulpore so behave? A social service agency might orient data on Jubbulpore's industries towards a question of labour-management arrangements. But we would take the same data and direct it towards an analysis and explanation of the factory worker's religious activities.

### Interpretations

1. Our final assumption was that it is not the business of social research workers to tell what their findings may mean. As social

scientists we must leave to the administrators and theologians the question of interpretation.

*A Statement Concerning Scientific Research detailed in the following note.*

"To see what is general in what is particular, and what is permanent in what is transitory is the aim of scientific thought . . . The possibility of disentangling the most complex evanescent circumstances into various examples of permanent laws is the controlling idea of modern thought." A.N. Whitehead. *An Introduction to Mathematics*, New York, 1921 pp. 11-13, H. Holt.

Research is the practice of seeking out relationships of functional dependence between two or more variables, using scientific techniques systematically. These techniques include the following:

Collecting empirically derived data.

Measuring such data by standard scales. In the case of human relations, measurement (will be in quantitative units of frequency, time, distance, activity) or in structural units of pattern; or in typological units arranged on a continuum. The units of measurement for the relations of people are rarely used by the people being studied, and must be worked out by the researcher, in terms of standard measurements.

Organizing research procedures through the following stages: the selection and definition of a workable problem, the preliminary exploration, the formulation of an hypothesis, the exhaustive pursuit of data using methods normal to the social sciences (the historical, statistical case study, ecological, participant observer methods, etc. etc.), the sorting of data into natural categories, the testing of the hypothesis, the positive or negative generalization.

Habitually studying all phases of the problem objectively, and, as far as possible, dispassionately. Although the researcher cannot erase past mental experiences from his present thinking, he can try to discipline his prejudices and sentiments, subordinating them to the quest for correct description and generalization.

Abstracting the generalities from particular elements so as to show the dependence of one happening upon another.

Ascertaining the presence or absence of a functional relationship between one variable and another, and, when a functional relationship is discovered, measuring the degree to which a change in one corresponds with a change in another. In the social sciences it

rarely, if ever, happens that only two variables are involved; almost always more than two, and normally many, operate within the configuration.

Stating the aforementioned functional relationship in quantitative terms: In the social sciences and religion, a functional relationship may be illuminated by typologies, structural patterns, case materials, photography, and so on. Quantitative formulae alone may not afford understanding, or guarantee reliability, quantification is the *sine qua non*.

A problem involving scientific research is considered solved only when explicit relationships of functional dependence between two or more variables make dependable prediction possible.

## **GLIMPSES INTO PRIMITIVE CULTURE OF INDIA**

**A. M. SOMASUNDARAM**

**A** study of aboriginal cultures and values of life is of great sociological significance. The various culture patterns of tribal people give a cohesion and a meaning to the life of the primitive strata of society. The distinctions and proclivities exhibited by the hill-folks in their manifold behaviours are mostly credited to the influence of their typical physical surroundings,—the flora, the fauna, the natural potentialities, the resources of food supply and various other forces. Recent contacts with civilisation, indeed, have brought many changes in several aspects of tribal life, but these innovations could not completely root out the essentials and values of primitive existence. Therefore, even today most of the aboriginals still struggle for maintaining their levels of culture. It is generally held that the aboriginals were the earliest settlers of the country and that these men alone built up the country's history in the remotest period. They cleared the forests, and wrested the land from the depredations of the tiger and the fangs of the snake. They were reputed bow-men and adepts in the use of the arrow and the spear. Despite the internal feuds that broke out occasionally among them, they lived peacefully, unmolested for a long time till they were overcome by the mightier races. They had their own codes of law, rights, customs, festivals, strata, economy, gods and religion.

### **Tribal Land**

The tracts they inhabit are full of many an object of attraction. They are picturesque with "lofty green hills and darting waterfalls rushing along the sloping precipices and table lands, the gaping ravines and meandering hill streams, lofty beds of rock and thick jungles" Such a countryside has probably constituted the basis for the high degree of romance that the aborigines reveal in their external behaviour, in their joys and songs. The tribal areas of Orissa, Bastar, and Andhra Desh, for instance, are fully endowed with natural objects of beauty, and picturesqueness of scenery. These regions contain beautiful 'podu' land for cultivation and the slopes of the hills are strewn with beds of blossoms of various kind. Probably one with aesthetic sense would never fail to get completely immersed

for hours in gazing at these unparalleled objects, the gifts of Nature, enjoying the sweet scent emanating from the blossoms of the nearby forest and would perhaps be tempted to spend most of his years in the midst of these jungles and on the slopes of these hills. Such scenery of the habitat made the hillmen a charming people while the inaccessibility of the tracts enabled them to maintain for long their customs and habits more or less unimpaired.

### Classes of Aborigines

Nevertheless, the very inaccessibility of these beautiful areas which restricted the free inflow of other cultures turned the primitive groups in course of time into ignorant and superstitious people and such an isolation led also to the stunted growth of their mental life. However, the consolidation of the British rule in the country, the adventures of the industrialist, the greed of the ambitious money lender and the merchant, the zeal of the missionary and above all the expansion of civilisation stormed the traditional peace and melody of tribal life. These forces accelerated the inevitable racial miscegenation, cultural assimilation and adaptation and led mostly to economic rivalries and conflicts. Based on such contacts, Dr. Verrier Elwin classified the present-day aboriginal population of the country into four groups (cf: **Aborigines**). Dr. Majumdar (cf: **Matrix of Indian Culture**, p. 131) has divided the tribes into three groups, from the point of view of contacts with civilisation. The first group comprises of the primitive tribes, outside the pale of Hindu society; the second class is made up of the tribes who have shown a degree of association with the Hindu castes; the last group consists of tribes that are Hinduised.

According to Dr. Elwin the first class of aborigines who number not more than five million souls are the 'real primitives' living in hills and forests. Their culture contacts with civilised environment has not yet brought any notable innovations in the social life of this small block. Next to them come the primitives who also dwell in hills and forests, but these have begun to change in 'many small and subtle ways'. The distinction between the two is negligible and the economic fabric of these two classes of people reveals a corporate and largely communal life. Most of their economic activities are characteristic of collective strivings and mutual sharings. The axe cultivation (shifting or *odu*) for them is not only a means of economic subsistence but is itself a way of life and a pattern of culture. Another group of aborigines, a very

small section indeed, has won the battle of culture contact by assimilating all the good traits of civilisation, probably with no damage to their own tribal ways of life. This class comprises of the 'tribal chieftains, Gond Rajas, the big land lords, noble men, wealthy leaders and few highly cultured tribesmen'. Elwin writes, "These retain the old tribal names and their clan and totemed rules and observe elements of tribal religion, though they generally adopt the full Hindu faith and live in modern and even in European style". This class also is composed of aborigines who, to quote Elwin "by their own energy and enterprise, have improved their economic position and their local standing". With these members a favourable environment—'aristocratic tradition, economic stability or affluence, outside encouragement, a certain arrogance and self confidence—have worked successfully to assimilate the blessings of civilisation 'without injury to themselves'.

But the last group of aborigines, the bulk of tribal population totalling a twenty million miserable victims of civilisation, has begun to lose its hold on tribal culture, religion and social organisation hard-pressed by the influence of external contacts. The tale of these teeming millions is anything but happy. 'Their awful life conditions, illiteracy, ignorance of the most elementary laws of nature and inability to make use of the opportunities, witchcraft and superstition etc.,—have made them obsequious, timid and servile'. Defective policies of administration and the advent of civilisation have turned this vast bulk into the most economically exploited, socially degraded and morally degenerated units of rural society. These forces have also affected the very foundation of social life on which alone the once powerful and independent tribal organisation was built up. Most tragically 'they have lost (or losing) their language, their culture, their songs, their dancing and their laughter'.

### Tribal Organisation

The cultural levels of the primitive tribes, as well as their needs determine the kind of their political organisation. For instance the semi-nomadic Chenchu fulfils his obligations under the aegis of his own tribal Panchayat, the leader of which is not invested with unlimited powers while his neighbour Lambadi is strongly inclined towards an almost dictatorial leadership that would exert commendable discipline from the members of the tribe. Similarly, some tribes of Koraput Agency in Orissa that are more democratic in outlook

have provided for flexibility of rules of behaviour and accordingly leadership in such tribes has to maintain an attitude that generally appeals to the group members. The vagrant and nomadic sections of aboriginal population build up their organisation in conformity with their material needs. Therefore tribal leaders, to quote Dr. Majumdar (cf., *Races and Cultures of India*) "are not those who possess property or wealth; they are often without them. They are expected to lead their people out of harm's way, to warn them of impending trouble or calamity, to direct them to new means of control of food supply" and 'to organise methods of exploiting the resources of the habitat'. Thus tribal organisation and leadership are formed out of the peculiar considerations of physical environment, social patterns and psychological attitudes.

Among the primitive tribes leadership is both hereditary and elective. Where it is hereditary the leader enjoys wider powers and privileges. For instance the 'Kuntkottidar' families among the Munda-tribes of Bihar represent the hereditary type. Some times such leadership is associated with divine significance and in such groups the leader assumes the responsibilities of the priest as well.<sup>1</sup> "He is the supreme administrator and the chief judge and possesses supervisory powers over the sectional heads in a group. Often times he will be the presiding officer over all collective activities and social festivities. He has to meet out impartial justice and share the sorrows and pleasures of his group-folk". He is generally invested with powers to expel any member that breaks the recognised rules of the social code and to inflict severe forms of punishment for offences connected with moral turpitude. In spite of these multiple responsibilities with corresponding powers the leader cannot afford to act as an autocrat or a dictator, while any abuse of power or excess of conduct will hardly be tolerated by the electors. In unsophisticated tribal groups leadership cannot be bought by wealth inasmuch as such a position depends upon the candidate's ability to exercise control over the members, his initiative to foretell the wrath of the tribal gods, his shrewdness to grasp things abruptly, his ability to prepare his clansmen either for offensive or for defensive purposes and finally his readiness to respond to the psychological attitudes of his clansmen and for the fulfilment of the material, religious, moral and social needs of his community. For the

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1. A. M. Somasundaram: *A Peep into Primitive Life in India* *Human Affairs* Part II 1946.

services he renders, he is often times rewarded in kind and the tribal Panchayat accords him special privileges of various kinds. Generally the office of the tribal leader does not make any provision for regular specific payments, but in many tribes at collective ceremonies, the headman is presented with a pair of cloths, a fowl and sometimes a specific part of the meat of the hunted animal. When he is invited to decide cases of marital lapses or any dispute arising out of distribution of land or property or any litigation thereof, the leader is paid a few coins, liquor and a part of the fine inflicted upon the offender.

The tribal Panchayat decides the cases of breaches of custom, law, morality and economic magic. The aboriginal is guided in his outdoor conduct by tradition and social etiquette. His behaviour is moulded by sentiment, belief, custom and superstition rather than by reason or advocacy. His belief in supernatural beings, his faith in divination and his confidence in the leadership account for the good working of the tribal code. Morality is associated with divine wrath and trespass is apprehended with a belief in the total ruin of the family, mortal injury or any other serious loss. Therefore, moral lapses are treated as acts against divinity. Similarly offences that deal with ownership, tenancy, group behaviour and the like are dealt with equal severity; lest dereliction on the part of the Panchayat in their discharge of obligations, should cause untold misery and distress to the entire community. Hence the system of infliction of physical punishment, of fine, of social boycott and of expulsion from the tribe are the methods whereby evil and immoral conducts are taken cognizance of, and attempts are made to remedy these anomalies. It is on the same ground, the tribal Panchayat acts as the main political institution of the tribal society. Panchayat and leadership are the pivot of tribal culture. The working of the Panchayat is simple and efficient enough to suit the peculiar psychological levels of aboriginals. It is the main political organisation, the mouthpiece of material aspirations, and the champion of civil rights in the primitive society. The sanction for its successful working cannot be traced to the documentary records in the corners of legislative secretariat, but it seeks unlimited but welcome and almost unavoidable powers and responsibilities from the approval of the village folk coupled with their admiration and unshaking confidence in their trusted headmen. Modern societies have governments that require law courts and police staff at enormous expen-



## GLIMPSES INTO PRIMITIVE CULTURE OF INDIA

diture, to keep law and order, to suppress violence and opposition and to strengthen the big body of power-politics. Cannons of public finance are recognised and mutuality of obligations maintain the social order. The more the culture contacts, the less the heed the aboriginals pay to their heritage of spiritual, moral and social obligations and thus alone notions of private property and individual ownership enter into their economy.

The tribal substratum of India still follows a sort of traditional economy, though in an emasculated form. The guiding principles of their economy,—mutuality, cooperation, and communal well-being, are still found in their dealings. Writers of note have held that the spirit of cooperation characterises primitive communities and that 'income is never prized for aggrandizement' but is reckoned as a necessary medium 'to effect an equitable adjustment between the material and spiritual values of the community.' It is also never amassed for the sake of profit and never utilised for purposes of exploitation. Tribal economy reveals an adjustment of group needs with nature's potentialities and therefore attempts are made to reach such an adjustment due regard being paid to the size of the 'population, its material needs, the availability of resources and the degree of skill.' Production is mostly realised as the fruit of relentless communal labour, with a system of distribution worked out on equitable collective basis. The problem of food supply which is generally treated as a collective responsibility has given rise to planned system of production and distribution. The economic organisation of tribal societies is not only a mere simple response to their material requirements but it also reveals a socialised response to various obligations on the part of the primitives.

Since barter is extensively in vogue in primitive communities the aboriginal groups usually fulfil their undertakings based on the ideas of mutuality of obligations, resulting in a net work of cooperation. But cooperation is not without reciprocity, even though it does not necessarily involve the return of the same thing borrowed or lent in economic transactions.

Primitive men, of course, do possess a set of ideas about property. Morgan, Rivers and others have held that they have no conception of private property and that they treat wealth as group ownership. These writers hold that in the earliest primitive societies communistic holding of property was the main economic basis. Though this argument is not without ground in the earliest

stages, primitives did to some extent recognise rights of private ownership. Thus it can be assumed that both private property and communal ownership existed side by side. Property in aboriginal India is of three types, communal, family and personal. Hunting grounds, granaries, groves, temples, altars, dormitories, dancing grounds, pasture lands, all these are held communally, while agricultural implements, darning garments, huts, holdings of land, cattle, slaves (where slavery is in vogue) come under family or joint property. Fruit trees, *mahua*, *salap* trees, dress, ornaments etc. are owned by individuals.

In various tribal areas in the south of India primitive agriculture is carried on under two systems—the Podu or shifting cultivation and the terrace. Podu is practised by many tribes of Assam, Bihar, Orissa, C. P., Madras and Hyderabad. It is known by different names such as Bewar, Jhum, Konda, Dongar etc. The Khond, the Koya, the Hill Reddi, the Kolam, the Naikopad, the Gond and few Savaras—practise it in Madras and Hyderabad. Shrubs and trees on the slopes of the hills are felled with axe and are burnt, the ashes being used as manure. The seeds are broad-cast, dances are held and sacrifices of animals, fowls and pigs complete the ritual.

Millet, Jawari, Olasi, pulses, oil seeds and groundnut are raised by podu. Podu pieces need weeding only once but in the second and the third year the prolific growth of weeds must be eradicated twice. After three or four years the tract becomes useless for cultivation and therefore is abandoned until the trees again grow there to admit a second felling. The terrace cultivation involves a method whereby the waters of hill streams are controlled by making a change in their course and thus are utilised to raise crops like paddy. Tribes like the Gadaba, the Parja, the Savara in Orissa and Madras provinces practise it. Fifteen to twenty beds of land are dug one below the other in a terraced fashion into which the controlled water is allowed to flow. After these plots are filled with water the course of the flow is again changed and the pieces are allowed to become marshy. These are then tilled and paddy beds are grown.

#### Tribal Economy

The institution of tribal economy is signally distinctive. 'Institutions', in the words of Dr. R. R. Marret (cf. *Anthropology*) "express the externals of the life of man in society so far as they reflect intelligence and purpose". Primitive economy not only illustrates the stages of progress achieved by man in the evolution from savagery to civilisation, but as an institution is expressive of

the strivings of the aborigines towards the realisation of the values of collectivism and cooperation. Primitive culture for centuries has recognised the complexity of economic existence as the tribal groups with their marginal cultures follow more than one occupation. Notwithstanding the absence of provision for specialization of functions in their economy and despite the multiplicity of economic pursuits the aborigines have their own clear cut rules and systems of economy.

Dr. R. W. Firth (*Human Types*) writes that the primitive communities have comparatively a simple material equipment which has not been integrated into an industrial organisation; 'these are frequently small in size and they lack any system of wide inter-communication with each other.' Such an economic pattern may not be found extensively among the tribal groups today since in this world of changing cultures, the primitive life too has begun to change. Such a change is of course inevitable as every tide of civilisation and culture contact show them changed ways of life as well as many significant innovations. Some changes have left profound impression upon the economic patterns of several tribes of India like the Lambadis, the Erikulas, the Mundas, the Parjas, the Doms etc. Prior to the introduction of money economy mutual exchange of goods to meet the requirements of any two neighbouring groups was the basic principle that alone guided the tribal economic transactions. It is a barter organisation, and also an institution in which are found, according to Dr. Firth, 'family ties, wider obligations to kinsfolk and to neighbours, loyalty to chiefs and elders, respect for clan taboos and beliefs in control of food and other things by spirits, ancestors and gods'.

Indeed an economy embracing these multiple obligations both material and spiritual, was best suited to the tribes that followed the life ways of hunters and food collectors, who with simple needs did not covet largescale undertakings. The same holds true also of the hunters of the forest with nomadic behaviour who do not require the modern economy, which they consider superfluous. However, 'the needs of food quest may make association,' writes Majumdar (*Races and Cultures of India*), 'of a few families conducive to economic life and group solidarity'.

These are the basic features of tribal economy. Cooperation is its structural basis. Each village will have a common club and dormitory. Primitive archaeology consists of unrecorded material

relating to the construction of small thatched huts with mud walls exhibiting crude but simple architecture round a common square. The hill men pay equal rates of tax and protect their group from the disasters of a famine by storing corn in village granaries. Dr. Elwin aptly sums up the essentials of primitive economy as follows: "In the spirit of economic fellowship some primitive villages are a hundred years ahead of modern world. The communal life of the wilder people in which almost everything is shared and in which the joy or sorrow of one is the joy and sorrow of the whole community is a beautiful thing to witness."

Primitive Society is divided into several mutually exclusive tribes each having its own pattern of life and activities. A tribe is a socio-economic unit with territorial jurisdiction. As Dr. Firth so well puts it "the social structure of primitive tribes includes the different groups which its people form and the institutions in which they take part." Each group or the tribe is divided into several exogamous and endogamous clans or sects and each of the sects is composed of a number of *gotras*, totemic or otherwise.

It should also be noted that primitive society comprehends a code or definite principles of stratification based on age, sex, locality and occupation. Waves of migration consequent upon economic pressure result in the split up of the tribe into a number of segments. Such a step inevitably brings changes in the external behaviour of the tribesmen concerned. Several Naga tribes, the aboriginals of Munda group, the pre-Dravidian stocks of the South, and the nomadic tribes of the North, have had undergone significant changes in many aspects of their life. For instance, the Lambadis though a widely scattered tribe with common ancestry and culture, on account of the ecological and social environments in their different habitats, have affected significant innovations in their cultural life. Dr. Ehrenfels (*Mother Right in India*) thinks that the Lambadis are possibly indicative of 'a not quite recent individualisation in cultural development'. But I should think that they have been changed a lot in recent times in their cultural outlook on account of their incessant contacts with the civilised Telugucastes in Northern Circars and Telingana.

A tribe splits up into several families. A number of families make a *gotra* falling within a group of Gods as among the Gadabas and claiming a common origin. Several of these *gotras* are organised into a clan or sect, mostly endogamous, and the tribe is formed

out of these sects. Some of these clans are exogamous and marriage between two sects (even *gotras*) worshipping the same house of Gods is prohibited. As a rule, sect endogamy and *gotra* exogamy both are observed. However, where sects are endogamous, marriage between the two sects worshipping different groups of Gods is not allowed. Some of these clans have developed economic peculiarities, dietetic regulations and other social differences. The Erikulas<sup>2</sup> of Madras presidency are divided into several divisions organised after economic pursuits they formerly adopted. They are also an exogamous tribe. The Reddi Enadis<sup>3</sup> and the Challa Enadis, the two sections of the Enadi tribe are so styled because of the different occupations they took up for livelihood. The Lambadis<sup>4</sup> are found in six exogamous sects and the origin of each of these divisions can well be traced to the peculiarities in occupations, in diet and in religious practices they observe. In spite of these differences all the sections are allowed to mix up freely among themselves and each sect has its specific obligation to discharge for the social well-being of the tribe. These dietetic and occupational differences not only account for the complexity of stratification but these contribute to marital prohibitions and food and other taboos. In the Chenchu society<sup>5</sup> these divisions are based on locality and difference in occupational pursuits. The Godabas<sup>6</sup> of Koraput Agency are divided into six main sects and each of these is marked by dietetic regulations, superior economic pursuits, locality and status. In a word it may be said that tribes in India are divided into sects or clans based on territorial, occupational, religious and dietetic considerations.

### Tribal Marriages

Among several aboriginal tribes of India marriage is a simple affair and implies the mutual decision of the couple to settle down as man and wife. It is as such neither a sacrament nor a life long bond between the couple. Married life under such system may lead to family frictions but primitive society has provided remedy

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2. Excellent material on the Erikulas is to be found in L.A.K. Iyer's 'Castes and Tribes of Mysore' and also in the recently published "Adivasula" by Nagabhushanachary., Executive officer, Mandapet, E. Godavari Dt.
  3. The 'Enadis'—P.C. Reddy, Gudur, Nellore Dt.
  4. The 'Lambadis'—A.M. Somasundaram.
  5. The 'Chenchus'—Christoph von Furer—Haimendorf.
  6. The 'Gadabas of Koraput'—A.M. Somasundaram.

against such anomalies of life through methods like divorce, widow marriage and secondary forms of marriages. Primitive groups realise the significance of mating as essential for fecundity. Both self maintenance and self preservation which are based on fundamental instincts have given rise to the origin of family and various forms of marriage.

'The development of organised patterns of social life and the realisation of ethical and social values achieved the present form of marriage'. It is thought to be the result of man's endeavour to secure superior social status by producing children of undisputed paternity since it was this undisputed mother-hood that alone gave a superior position to woman in earliest society. The evolution of property from mother-right to father-right also gave rise to the claim of descent from mother to father and led to the origin of monogamy. It is the best arrangement since it enables the couple to live in constant association and mutuality of ideas that accelerate the cementation of marital affinities.

Marriage in tribal India is of several types and is divided into monogamy, polygyny and polyandry. Polygamy, means the plurality of husbands or wives. Polygyny is the system whereby a man takes more than one wife and it is the commonest form of marriage among the primitive as well as the lower strata of society. Desire for variety of taste and ambition for economic status, lead to polygynous marriages in India. Dr. Majumdar (*Races and Cultures of India*) observes that "among the lower cultures in India polygyny is a very common institution. In some tribes the possession of a number of wives determines the social status of the person concerned" and 'various standards are insisted on by the tribes which allow such practice'. Polyandry or plurality of husbands as an institution is far more restricted in distribution than polygyny. It owes its origin primarily to the scarcity of women while it presupposes 'an artificially produced preponderance of the marriageable males'. The Khasas and the Koltas of U.P., the Nayars, the Todas and the Badagas of South India are some of the tribes that still observe polyandrous practices.

There are some traditionally established methods whereby mates are acquired. Marriage arranged by parents, by mutual consent, by purchase, by elopement, by capture and by service are some of the methods whereby marital relations are established. The necessary requisites of the girl that appeal to the youth are her attractive features, serviceability, fidelity, mild disposition, agility and talent

in music and dance. The young man by becoming adept in the use of bow and arrow and in marksmanship and with prowess and strength, by his ability to compose folklore extempore, and by his ready wit catches the eye of his sweet heart. Economic status in some cases particularly among the sections affected by culture-contacts influences the eligibility of marriage. Where the girl among the Munda tribes wields superior economic status the boy volunteers to serve his prospective father-in-law and continuous hard labour wins for him the hand of his coveted sweet heart. Under levirate a man's wife automatically becomes the wife of his brother after the latter's death. Tribes like the Lambadi, the Erikula, the Gadaba etc., practise levirate. Sororate is the system whereby the sisters of a wife automatically become the wives of the person concerned.

In tribal societies marriage is mostly adult and the ceremonial aspect differs from tribe to tribe. Marriage formalities are organised after environmental conditions and cultural levels. But in every tribe marriage involves a procedure,—propitiation of tribal gods, totemic objects and ancestral spirits, excessive drink, costly communal feasts, grand dances and payment of heavy bride-prices. Marriage rites are different among the nomadic tribes to those observed by the Agency-tribes. Marriage is both exogamous and endogamous, but generally speaking, family exogamy and clan endogamy form the basic principles of tribal marriages. Among the substantial sections in the tribes child marriages too are celebrated with a certain degree of pomp and festivities. In tribes like the Baigas, the Oraons, the Erikulas, the Binjhawar, considerations of distance and social practices determine the marriage rules. Perhaps these factors have led to the rules of rigid exogamy, even though marital necessities in many cases have obliged these groups to relax their rules. Sometimes on this account traditions also are broken. The bride-price or Kanyasulkam, is the commonest item of expenditure, without which and the drink no marriage may be performed at all. The bride-price is heavy compared to the economic conditions of the tribesmen. It is known by different names, Oli, Dhangeli, Tonka, Gonong, Chari, Tolla, Dahej etc., It may be paid in kind or coin or both may be demanded.

### Tribal Religion

Primitive religion is composed of three elements—the worship of gods and spirits, the death rituals and the totemic ceremonies.

In every human society there appears to be a belief that the individual "does not cease to exist at the death of his body but that he has some continuity in immaterial form". In some societies it is held that the soul lives on and cannot be destroyed. Such a belief in the 'persistence of the soul after death has its culmination in the institution of ancestor worship. The primitives believe that the spirits of the dead, 'do not simply rest in some 'Elysium' but constantly watch with interest the 'doings of their descendants, tender them advice, and even 'revisit their people through some human or other medium'. Here is also a general belief that the spirits of men may take on the form of animal. Hence Dr. Firth has held (**Human Types**) that the concept of the relationship of the spiritual beings with the doings of men involves the idea of supernatural power. This idea has probably given rise to the notion of *mana* power. *Mana* signifies the effective power of an impersonal force.

Primitive religion, thus aims at the winning over the forces of supernatural world for his material prosperity. His implicit faith in the existence of deities and spirits forced him to adopt a complex code of appeasement, worship, and propitiation of the objects of supernatural world, and towards the end of the priestly class in the tribal societies resorts to divination, witchcraft, magic and sorcery. Majumdar (**The Matrix of Indian Culture**) writes that the primitive man in his religion is 'inspired by the idea of *mana*, *bonga*, *aren*, i. e. the concept of an impersonal force, indefinite, and indeterminate, yet all pervasive'. The same writer thinks that "this vague concept of power which has been shaped by the magician, the sorcerer, the priest and even the tribal chief to endow the qualities of animate and inanimate objects or spirits and godlings enter into material and immaterial objects of man's environment, provided the sanction of taboos, of customs, rules and restrictions, group mores and conduct".

Death among some tribes is treated as a stage 'in which the man's shadow departs from his body and becomes an ancestral god'. This has led to the funeral rituals, ancestor-worship and sacrifices. But fundamentally, tribal religious ideas evolved out of the belief in the transmigration of soul and in the hold of the dead ancestors over the life activities of the surviving members. The primitives personify the forces of nature, as these could not be conquered. They also believe in pulsation of the inanimate objects with life.



Above all, animism and totemism have become the important features of tribal religion.

Psychologists like Wundt, trace the origin of totemism to the belief of primitive man that 'worms crawling out of dead man's body are his soul'; Durkhiem considers the totemic object as the collective representation of the society. Some ascribe a psychological origin to totemism. According to some totemism arose out of two considerations—(1) belief of the savage in the transmigration of soul and (2) the realisation of the probable danger from wild beasts during hunting expeditions. The primitives thought that by incarnating their lives in any material object their bodies would be safe during hunt. Hence they associated themselves with supernatural beings and believed that they were safe. The inability of the savage to win over the forces of nature led to the appeasement of the latter, and this inability gradually resulted in the adoption of many totemic practices in religious ceremonies. This is true of several tribes of India. There are few writers indeed who account for the origin of totemism from the complexity of economic transactions and frequent barter exchanges. Despite these diverse opinions, all schools of totemism agree that totemism is an important social institution, and today it stands sybolic to the ancient ecological set up in the prehistoric past.

A word about tribal gods. 'Every tribe has its own conception of demonology the more advanced the tribe, more numerous are the spirits and godlings it propitiates'. Tribal gods to some extent, are exclusive to the tribesman. Their spirits also are of the same order. Mother Earth, Sun God, Mata,—are some of the members in the pantheon of tribal gods. Those processes of nature, that tell upon the existence of the tribals, are personified and venerated. Different spirits preside over different crises of life like fever, disease, measles, rheumatism, pox, hysteria, gout, death etc. Hence Majumdar writes that 'among the primitive tribes the power of spirits is greatly over-estimated and the faith of the people in witch-doctors is yet unshaken.' Culture contacts, as well as the failure of the tribal spirits to redress the grievances of the primitive folk, have compelled the tribal men to borrow some of the Hindu gods in their religious fold. Tribes like the Lambadi, Chenchu, Parja, Enadi, Erikula, Gadaba, Chefo, Paniko etc., for instance, have added to their list of gods several deities of the Hindu order. The primitive man never hesitates to add a few more gods from the Hindu

pantheon, if only those would be of any use to him. This then is about the tribal religion.

### Tribal Values of Life

Primitive society is characterised by archaic dignity and charm. Its members are noted for many a virtue. There are many elements in their life worth preserving. The respect for the dead, devotion to the soil, the power to stage colourful and magnificent dramas and festivals, the discipline of the members and the adhesion to tradition make the aboriginal life interesting and valuable.

The aborigines are noted for several types of decoration, in which they exhibit an uncorrupted oriental beauty and style, while their artistic excellence is most magnificently revealed in their simple home styles and also in their cottage industries. They keep their small but well kept huts artistically beautiful decorating the walls and the floor with simple patterns—an art which is often lamentably found missing in modern architecture. The huts of the tribes of Bihar, of the Nagas of Assam, of Parja, Gadaba and Dom of Orissa, the dormitory of the Bondos, the Ghotul of the Gonds of Bastar, the milkhouse of the Badaga of the south, are all specimens that reveal a simple way of life of the crude dwellers of the jungle and the hill. The dancing arena, the collective granary, the dignified village fencing, the patterns of burial sites, the ceremonial hunt and the simple home industries—all these bear undisputed testimony to the multiple aptitudes of the primitives and their craving for an unimpaired existence.

The primitives are an honest and simple folk. They live in nature and fade away in its mystery. They are contented people and are always averse to exploitation or profit making. They know how to recognise and respect things belonging to others and duplicity are unknown to them. In several activities of their life they reveal a corporate life. Games, festivities and religious celebrations are all communally participated. They drink, dance and sing all in congregation. Among them crime is rare, adultery is almost unknown and individual behaviour is marked by honesty and truthfulness. Ideally hospitable, exceptionally candid and remarkably simple in habits these primitives lead a simple but natural existence marked by mirth, song, dance and game.

Yet they have no plan for the morrow. Whatever is earned in the day is spent care-free by evening. They do not, unless influenced by agencies of civilisation, ponder about amassing for the progeny.

The hillman's food is simple, his tastes are genuine and his wants are of course few. His mind is generous and is always enriched by integrity of behaviour. Effusive by temperament he is courageous to express his point and his plainness attracts others for him.

The unspoiled aboriginal is noted for purity of his taste and the beauty of simple artistic creations produced from the available material. Elwin writes: "He is an expert in the art of personal ornamentation, in the decoration of his house, in the carving of masks, combs, snuff-boxes and in the use of cowries and beads".

Simple and happy, the aboriginal life is enriched by natural pleasures procured in a land of beauty and charm. To the primitives the forest is everything—"it is sandal, sweet and joy". They have their own simple division of house-hold duties, that are pleasant and never tiresome. They wake up in the early hours of morning, wash their bodies with cold water, drink their gruel and attend to their work. Women preoccupy themselves in domestic work. The aged get busy over mats and baskets. Men go to clear the 'Podu' on the hill, gather fruit, mango or tamarind. Some would collect honey, leaf, and fuel. The house-wife assists her husband in all his activities, of course, observing the established social, economic and religious taboos. Children graze the cattle or hunt field-mice or get engaged in small game. In the evening after meal they indulge in song, dance and game.

The daily routine of a typical aboriginal consists of a relentless toil in the field for rats or rabbits. The gruel is all that he takes for diet of course, a chilly and a bit of salt added to it. Occasionally he may procure meat or vegetable and enjoy its taste. His favourite Ragi or rice beer—his elixir,—is prepared in his home. The wild life of the Chenchu, the Bondo, the Koya and others aims at digging the earth for tubers or for trapping the rat, while sometimes angling may become his entire activity of the season. He is often lazy for many days and is always inclined to spend time in game or dance. His favourite pastime consists of his indefatigable search in the mountain crack or in the field hole for a small mouse or a rat.

The domestic life of a tribal house wife is marked by fidelity and virtue. The real primitives in this respect, 'stand as an object lesson to the whole world'. The woman's position in society is solid and honourable and she goes freely with honourable pride about the country side. She shares the joys and woes of her husband,

and her alacrity in house-hold duties, her sense of responsibility in the discharge of obligations, and her temperamental adaptability to the surroundings makes her the real happy companion of her lover, Hence remarks Elwin, "As a companion she is humorous and interesting, as a wife devoted; as a mother heroic in the service of her children. Her brave, laborious and faithful life is an inspiration".

Many tribes in India impart to their youth a sort of social training which is deemed indispensable for a disciplined and systematic life of young bachelors of both the sexes. In tribes where schools that impart a regular type of education are unknown, separate houses called dormitories (love houses) with matrons to look after the inmates are provided. These are called 'Dhangda' or 'Dhangdi' Ghar, Ghotul etc. Both boys and girls can freely mix with each other, understand each other, and such an intimate association develops mutual love between the couple leading to marriage. Dormitory is the best training centre for the youth to understand their problems of future career. Life in the dormitory is associated with many rules of conduct. It serves as the guest house where strangers are entertained, and also becomes a centre which fosters among its inmates a spirit of social responsibility and self help. In some villages dormitories are built separately for boys and girls. The Oraon, the Munda, the Naga, the Bondo Parja, the Dhruba, the Gadaba, the Gond,—all these tribes have dormitories in their villages.

### **Tribal Music and Dance**

The hill tribes with their laws and morality and with codes of behaviour, culture and religion, live in purity, innocence and crystal-like simplicity. These very virtues of life are fully expressed in their folklore, song and dance. The tribal poetry is unrecorded but each generation transmits it to the progeny by practice and heresay. This unscripted poetry is greatly enriched by the ingenuity of thought and experience. Tribal poetry naturally therefore provides available material for field anthropologists to unearth the hidden meaning of aboriginal life. The folklore contains the 'songs of the celestial'. Songs are distinctive and are expressive of a harmonious combination of melody and rhythm. They consist of themes ripe with rich but simple experiences of an artistic life moulded in a charming and humane environment. These songs are marvellous as outbursts of human emotion. It is through songs, the aboriginal depicts the entire course of human

life from birth to death. 'The song', to quote Pandit Lakshmi Narayana Sahu, 'is a soothing balm to the hard life of the aboriginals'. These songs are further wafted away in the wind to distant places and produce a weird effect on the hearer, who 'forgets the little selfishness of the mundane world'. ((The Hill Tribes of Jeypore)

Tribal dances are picturesque. These are the exclusive prerogatives of tribal existence. Dances are performed on all festive occasions and at social gatherings. Dances provide the chance for the unmarried couple to understand each others talents and skill. It is expressive of tribal aspirations, a revelation of its 'psychological makeup, and a relief against the monotony of a changeless or uneventful forest life. The ceremonial propitiation of gods and totemic objects, the return from a successful communal hunt, the worship of ancestor spirits, the celebration of marriage, and important tribal decisions,—are all the occasions when the grand tribal dances are performed. Dance prescribes few rules of conduct and discipline, and the dance monitor exercises some rights over the members of the troupe, in order to keep the play in tact and rhythm. Adults, boys and girls in batches of fifties with characteristically colourful robes and ornaments, and with flowers decently and artistically tucked in the hair, join at evenings till late in the night to exhibit their skill in dance, practically allowing the occasion to magnify itself into a festive excursion. Thus the 'Holi' dance of the Banjara or the Lambadi, the 'Gol Gadhado' play of the Bhil, the 'Bison-horn' dance of the Koya Gond, the 'Densa' of the Parja, the 'Dung-dunga' of the Bondo and the Gadaba, and the magnificent shows of the Naga dance ritual, the heritage of tribal art, the essence of their gleeful life, and their pride for centuries,—are all the occasions when the passer-by or the visitor to tribal tracts is simply captivated by the alacrity, dexterity and rhythm of movement exhibited splendidly by these rustic participants in such performances of commendable simplicity, dignity and charm. Tribal dance is an art never unrivalled by and inimitable to the seemingly superior groups of mankind.

Such are the glimpses into the tribal life in India. For long these groups maintained in fact, their culture, civilisation, dance, mirth and game with no outside interference. Nevertheless the inevitable has appeared on the scene of the tribal land and forced these happy people to succumb to ghastly changes in life. The result is the total decline of their culture and annihilation of their existence.

## NOTICES OF BOOKS

UP FROM THE APE, By *Earnest Albert Hooton*.

*Published by the Macmillan Co. N. Y. pp XXI + 788, Price 5.25*

The well-known author of this book has presented to his readers a very interesting and complete study of human evolution. The book is written in a very popular style and it is very creditable on the part of the author to present a scientific subject in such an interesting manner as he has done all through the book.

The author has dealt with man's position in the animal world. The description of the primates and their development from the lower animals gives the reader an idea of evolution. Anatomical evolution of various parts of the body enriches the book.

The author describes the individual life cycle of man and primates starting from the embryo. His comparative study of the growth of the individual and social life of man and apes is entertaining and instructive at the same time.

The description of the fossil primates and fossil men are complete and up-to-date.

The author gives us a new and revised racial classification of man and also racial history. He also deals with the fascinating and growing subjects of human genetics, comparative human physiology including the blood groups and also relation of physical characters with mentality and temperament.

The author has not forgotten to add by way of an appendix to his book a chapter on practical methods of anthropometry giving brief instruction on laboratory techniques of anthropology.

This is an indispensable book both for the layman and the specialist on the subject.

S. K. R. C.

INTRODUCTION TO EARLY ROMAN LAW, By C. W. Westrup Vols I, II and III. Dan. Cr 52 - Translated from the Danish by Miss. Annie. I. Fausboll. in collaboration with the author Einar Munksgaard, Norregade 6, Copenhagen and Oxford University Press.

The work under review deals with various aspects of the patriarchal joint family. In the first volume we have many interesting topics viz. marriage, ancestor worship, community of cult, the unmarried state, life partnership, polygyny, fidelity, kinship, matriarchy and exo-

sure of infants. The second volume contains an elaborate discussion on the undivided joint family with special reference to family property, rights of heirs and other allied topics. The third volume deals with origins of law; the fundamental notions and principles of the patriarchal joint family, primitive notions of succession, development of *patria potestas* and family property.

The learned author describes his work as comparative sociological studies. The methods and the topics are not new. The comparative method, made popular by Sir Henry Maine, has no doubt been followed by many in studying early institutions, but the work under review excels in its wealth of details and lucidity of treatment. Although an emphasis has been laid on the origins and development of the Roman institutions, we have in this work glimpses of similar institutions among other Aryan speaking peoples like the ancient Indians, Iranians, Greeks, Germans and other races. Many detailed references have been made to, and extracts drawn from literary works in Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and other languages. So far as the Indian original sources are concerned, the learned author has drawn upon the Vedas, the Dharma Sutras, the Dharma Sastras, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and other works. There is some uncertainty as regards the dates of some of these works, particularly the Indian epics and the Dharma Sastras. It may, therefore, be somewhat difficult to say how far the extracts from some of these works depict the true picture of the early Indian Society.

The work under review has already made its mark among learned people. We have come across references to it in some recent publications. We feel no hesitation to recommend this work to all students of history, anthropology, law and sociology.

P. C. Chunder

**BHARATBARSHA O BRIHATTAR BHARATER PURABRITTA :**  
Vol. 1, (In Bengali)—By Upendra Nath Biswas. Available from B. Sircar & Co, 15, College Square, Calcutta. Price Rs. 20/-. Pages 554.

The title of this book implies that it is only an old story about India and greater India though the book purports to be a historical work. The author seems to have hesitated to call it an 'Ittibritta' (history) probably because he was aware that he was only giving us a glimpse of history instead of a systematic and connected one.

As we think, this volume will be a surprising revelation to some and to others a thought-provoking subject on which to develop

and undertake further research. It shakes the foundation of some of our most firmly established historical beliefs and proposes to give us a new method of approach to interpret Vedic Mantras and Pauranic tales. On perusal of the book, these legends appear in a new texture, meaningful and intelligible which are otherwise senseless and fantastic. They have been made by the author the main raw materials on which to found and reconstruct Indian history since 8000 B.C. May or may not this interpretation be correct, we are provided with a very interesting approach with which to peep into an age enshrouded in mist and mystery. Doubtless, the book has opened up a new thinking line in the matter of research to obtain a correct picture of ancient India. The arguments are at once forceful and appealing. History as understood by modern historians is only a narrative of the ruling kings, of the political, social and economic conditions of the people. But the author says that in an age when religion and preceptor-rule were all-important in the country and predominated the lives of the people, their history was bound to be a portrayal of those religious propounders and of their influence over the people. The author asserts that political kings, monarchical forms of Government and with it politics are later developments and were not found in the 'Satya Yuga' (Golden Age) of India which dates as far back as 6000 B. C.; the history of such an age is to be sought for in contemporary literature, viz., Vedic, mythological and Ramayana and Mahabharata tales etc. which bear the impress of the religious organisation of that age and its chequered career. So the author proposes to stand on the very ground which had been hitherto discarded from the region of history as being meaningless and unbelievable.

Sense has been brought in the religious works by digging out the inner meaning underneath the otherwise unintelligible allegorical stories and myths and legends and the code language of the Vedas. The age upto about 1000 B. C. was an age of allegory and symbol and what we find in those religious compilations are mere allegorical stories written by the then historians to captivate the minds of the people with a story appeal. The main characters denote some forms of religion or others which were antagonistic to each other and always fighting among themselves, the events in the latter's career forming the events of the story. Thus Krishna in Indian legends and also Christ and Buddha were not historic personages, but personified forms of some faiths.

The author shows here, that the White Aryans penetrated into India and advanced as far as Ceylon during the period between 8000



B. C. to 7500 B. C. and not in 1500 B. C. as supposed by the European scholars and their naive followers who were eager to decry the antiquity of Indian civilisation. These Aryans worshipped nature, the various deities and performed 'Yagna'. In India they faced a civilisation of the black-skinned and short Dravidians and other aboriginals which was equally developed. As a protest against the Aryan forms of worship, caste divisions and 'Anuloma' marriage, there arose in about 6000 B.C. a new religion and philosophy known as 'Sindhu Dharma' or 'Chakra Dharma,' which swept over India and finally spread far and wide outside Indian borders, as far as the Mediterranean countries, Europe and Scandinavia in the West and Siam, Java, Sumatra etc. in the East. This eventually abolished caste-divisions and the consequent marriage restrictions, Yagna system and the worshipping of various deities. So there followed a consequent blending of the blood among the Indians and the Colour and Race purity of the Aryans was given a go-by. This brought about an era of 'Satya Yuga' (Golden Age) which lasted for 1000 years. The people lived a self-controlled divine life under the aegis of their spiritual overlords, there being no kings. The founder of this 'Sindhu Dharma' were three, namely, Shambar, Sita and Bharat and it is from this Bharat that India derives its name 'Bharatvarsha'. From 'Sindhu-Dharma' the river Indus is 'Sindhu' and the word 'Sindhu' has by a process of metathesis come to 'Hindu'. A thousand years later, there arose a difference of opinion among the followers of Shambar and Bharat as to their greatness; and this resulted in the parting of ways and in innumerable forms of faith each accepting some and rejecting the other aspects of their parent religion, 'Sindhu Dharma'. Thus the Asuras, Daityas, Danavas, Nagas, Suparnas, Yakshas, Rakshahs, Gandarvas, Kinnarvas were the appellations given to the followers of those offshoots. They were not the aboriginals as commonly understood.

At this time, a section of the Aryans tried to revive their old religion and blending their old faiths with some aspects of the 'Sindhu Dharma' brought about a Brahmanical resurrection. The author asserts that there is hardly any country in Eurasia where some or other branches of the 'Sindhu-Dharma' have not gone and moulded the lives of the people therein. So he has a firm conviction that the ancient history of the world is essentially a history of ancient India.

There is a chapter wherein he deals with the ancient Indian

methods of calculating time and in accordance with that method he has given a short chronological order of different epochs, i. e. 'Satya' 'Treta', 'Dwapar' and 'Kali' upto 1000 B. C; and a list of historical Kings of several dynasties upto Mahapadma Nanda, i. e. 401 B. C. has also been added. So we get here only outlines of different epochs and not the events century by century.

The present volume is a vast digest of the new code of interpretation of our past scriptures, and it is very interesting to go through the innumerable legendary tales collected under different heads requiring different sets of principles for their explanation, some of which are the following:—

Principles of human male form, human female form and animal form, Principles of limbs, Principles of food, fruit etc., Theories of Puppetship, Mediation, Match-making, Theories of Nomination, Intercession, Conveyance etc., Theory of Phallus etc. As an instance of allegory we give the following:—

In the Indian legendary tale called "The Churning of the Sea", it is said that the Surs and Asurs together churned the sea and out of it got 'Amrit'. Here sea is the symbol of the 'Sindhu Dharma'. The underlying meaning, therefore, is that the Surs and Asurs, the two schools of faiths, adopted the "Theory of immortality" of the 'Sindhu-Dharma' as their creed while abandoning its other theories.

We note, in conclusion, that side by side the moral development and cultural history, we don't find anything about the material condition of the people, about their means of livelihood and the level of the modes of production. To be complete, history, in modern sense, should depict the life as a whole. We will eagerly wait for the next two volumes wherein the author proposes to deal these in details, in order to derive maximum amount of satisfaction. Here we may point out one thing; and that is this profound question: Whether it is safe to put much premium on the literary compilations alone disregarding other materials which have a scientific value? Can anthropology, archaeology and sociology not validate contradict or corroborate the findings contained in the book?

For the present, we warmly appreciate the erudition and meticulous research of the author. The treatment of the subject and the style of the language afford a very pleasant study.

A. R. Choudhury